

Vice Mayor Hobbs, the honorable members of City Council, City Manager Payne, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is an honor to address you concerning the State of the City and to share with you accomplishments of 2001 and some of the challenges we face in 2002. Tonight, the Vice Mayor and I will also recognize eight individuals, some you may know and others you may not, that have given their love, dedication, time, and commitment to this community. This evening we will recognize them with the Mayor's Award of Excellence.

I ask your indulgence as I take a moment to recognize seven women, who in their own way are making a contribution to this community. Although they did not run for public office, without them, we could not do the things we must do as elected officials. They provide great support to us and to the City of Lynchburg. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming our wives, Mrs. Mary Adams, Mrs. Georgia Barksdale, Mrs. Brenda Hobbs, Mrs. Teresa Dodson, Mrs. Diane Garber, Mrs. Marie Seiffert and my own wife, Mrs. Glodelia Hutcherson. Thank you ladies.

A few short months ago, we watched transfixed as the horrific events of September 11 unfolded. Those events have left indelible marks on us all and we are forever changed. We were changed as we learned of the sacrifices of those that rushed, without thought of their own safety and well-being, to save thousands of victims, and in doing so lost their own lives. It changed us as we saw the anguished faces of loved ones left behind and the grimy faces of rescue workers as they sifted through tons of debris. It changed us as thousands of citizens answered the call to aid those affected by the devastation.

Those senseless acts of terrorism changed us in ways that we probably have yet to realize, but they also unleashed a renewed sense of patriotism,

strength and human dignity. In the days that followed we witnessed unbelievable courage. Firefighters, police officers, rescue workers, steelworkers and the common man and woman joined together in rescue attempts and later in recovery efforts. Those images will be burned into our psyche forever. September 11 was a defining moment in our country's history.

Although Lynchburg is miles away from ground zero, our citizens joined other Americans not only in answering the call for assistance but also in coming together in a spirit of prayer and healing. Over 3000 of you joined us at the Merritt Hutchinson Stadium in a community-wide vigil demonstrating that regardless of our socio-economic, racial, ethnic or religious backgrounds, we will always stand together as Americans.

Our own Fire Chief, Buddy Martinette, was one of those called to the Pentagon to assist with recovery efforts. Chief Martinette left his family and job behind to answer that call. The Chief is not with us tonight because he answered the call to duty once again and was serving on a Federal Emergency Response Team at the Winter Olympics in Utah. He will be back with us later this week but tonight we wish to thank him in his absence and say God Bless.

My fellow citizens let me assure you tonight that the members of our own police and fire departments are well trained. They are among the best in the Commonwealth and we can have complete confidence in the men and women that protect and serve us. I know they join me in asking for your assistance in protecting our community. Always be aware of the world around you. Make it your responsibility to learn what you can about any real threats to your safety and as rumors fly, make it your business to learn the difference between fact and fiction. Our first line of defense, whether we are

talking about threats to our safety or threats to our economic stability, is a well-informed, involved, engaged citizenry. Join us tonight in making that personal commitment. Public safety is a special calling and one of our Mayor's Award of Excellence recipients, Sheriff Lawrence Simpson, answered that call in 1974 when he became Lynchburg's sheriff. Among his many accomplishments is Operation Call-in for senior citizens. He and his staff provided 150 - 200 Christmas baskets and maintained a benevolent fund to assist those in need. In 2000, he was honored with the Exchange Club's Golden Book of Deeds for his lifelong commitment to service. Welcome Sheriff Simpson, and thank you for your service.

I say to you tonight that the state of the City is strong. It remains so despite the horrific acts of terrorism in New York, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania. It remains strong in the face of a recession, layoffs, and business closings. It is strong because citizens like you here in this room tonight, and those of you watching at home continue to rise to the challenge of making this City the strong community it is today and the even stronger community it will be in the future.

What would a speech be without at least one quote from Thomas Jefferson, especially here in Virginia? Thomas Jefferson wrote in a letter to Elbridge Gerry, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, "The steady character of our countrymen is a rock to which we may safely moor." Ladies and gentlemen, the City of Lynchburg is safely moored.

Though the City is strong, I cannot say we are not in difficult times. We are. Yet I am confident that we will weather this storm as we have so many others. Our new Governor, Mark Warner, said last month during the State of the Commonwealth Address "*...we know what it means to live through tough times - and to come through them stronger.*"

As our General Assembly deliberates over the State's budget, the City Manager and his staff are doing the same here at home. Although we have yet to receive the final word on the full impact of state actions on our local budget, we already know that Lynchburg will not escape unscathed.

Governor Warner has been frank in saying that the State budget is sorely out of balance with a potential revenue shortfall over the next 29 months of \$3.8 billion dollars. At this point in time, we know the State will spend less money for education and school construction, provide less funding for highway construction, as well as reduce funding for countless other programs.

Ladies and gentlemen, that does not bode well for us. Local governments could and probably will see some substantial cuts in, and additional cost responsibilities for, a variety of programs. Many of these programs are mandated by the state; however, funding to continue them is in jeopardy.

Many of you are aware of the special challenges faced by Virginia's cities. We are impacted by structural inadequacies in both the State's tax system and the form of its local governments. As a result, cities like Lynchburg are among the most fiscally stressed localities in the Commonwealth. This is compounded by the double whammy of the State's fiscal crisis and a national recession. As a result, we may well have less revenue to operate with in the next fiscal year when compared to the current one. Locally, our revenues in the areas of sales and meals tax are flat.

When the State reduces funding, all localities especially those already in a fiscally stressed situation suffer. The citizens of Lynchburg can be proud of the fact that this City has a long history of being prudent in its spending.

However, that also means that in tough budget times, there is very little excess to make up for funding shortfalls.

I believe that one of the significant questions facing Council during its upcoming budget deliberations will be whether or not to try to offset any reduction in state funding with local funds. Because of Council's commitment not to raise taxes, to do so would require spending reductions in other areas where local revenues fund City services.

Every member of City Council is well aware that when we receive the budget on March 14, we will be called upon to make some very tough decisions.

City Council will make the tough decisions you elected us to make and you have our word that we will be diligent in our deliberations. We cannot, nor should we, make these decisions in a vacuum. We need your assistance. The U. S. Constitution is quite eloquent in it's words...of the people, by the people, for the people. As citizens it is your right and your responsibility to understand the challenges this city faces and to work with us to find solutions.

We ask for your support as we attempt to make decisions that best reflect the common good of this community. We need your ideas and suggestions. We may need to make certain sacrifices, but we will make them together and become stronger for it.

In the search for long-term solutions, Lynchburg continues to work with thirteen of Virginia's oldest and most fiscally stressed cities. This coalition called Virginia First Cities is working to influence state legislation that will change the State's practice of providing relatively less support to First Cities despite extraordinary service needs which results in higher tax burdens for those cities. Some gains have been made in that arena but I ask

that you let your legislators know that tax restructuring is imperative to the success of our cities. Tell them quite simply to *Save Our Cities!*

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Lynchburg. One hundred and fifty years ago the U. S. Census reported that Lynchburg was the 89th largest city in the country with a population of a little over 8000. In their book, *Lynchburg, "The most interesting spot"*, Dorothy and Clifton Potter wrote about the powerful independent spirit of the people in Lynchburg. I began by saying that this City is strong because of its citizens and that was as true 150 years ago as it is today. Community service can make the difference between a city that thrives and one that dies.

The second Mayor's Award of Excellence recipient has a long history of community service. Those that know him know that he has spent many hours volunteering his time to improve and preserve the natural environment of this city. He is one of those engaged citizens I spoke of earlier and he makes his opinions known. Ed Page played an integral part in enhancing and promoting the Blackwater Creek Trail, as well as being one of the most active members of Citizens for a Clean Lynchburg. I dare anybody even half his age to keep up with him. Ed is with us tonight. Ladies and gentlemen, join me in welcoming Mr. Ed Page.

I'm sure Ed would agree that it is the responsibility of one generation to protect and preserve the environment for the generation to come. In an effort to do that, we must continue our efforts in the Combined Sewer Overflow program. To date, the City has completed, has under construction or has under design, 25 separation construction projects. If we are able to stay on schedule, construction of all major interceptor sewers, except for the James River Interceptor, should be complete by the end of 2002. As many of you are aware, this program carries a price tag of more than \$200 million

dollars. In order to complete the CSO program it is imperative that we continue to receive funding in the way of low interest loans and grants at both the state and federal levels. We thank our legislators in Congress and the General Assembly for the support they have given us in the past and we ask for their continued support.

When I was a child, not so many years ago, downtown Lynchburg was the place to be. Thanks to the hard work of many, it's beginning to be that way again. Last year, close to \$7 million dollars was invested in downtown. The really exciting news is that this revitalization isn't just a government undertaking. A significant portion of the work being done is through private sector investments. By the year 2005, we estimate that more than \$57 million dollars would have been invested in downtown. This total includes the costs of projects like Bluff Walk Center, Riverviews Artspace, the Human Services Building, the new Federal Courthouse, Central Virginia Community Services, and the Academy of Music. People are also volunteering their time and efforts to bring new life downtown. According to Terri Proffitt with Lynch's Landing, over 5000 volunteer hours have been recorded on downtown projects. It's great to be able to say---*If it's happening, it's happening downtown!*

Work is also continuing on the City's Comprehensive Plan with adoption expected in spring of this year. The Plan is the document that will guide decision making from a land use perspective for the next 20 years. It will impact neighborhoods and housing, transportation, parks and recreation, and economic development and redevelopment.

Many of you participated in the public meetings and forums and we encourage you to take advantage of other opportunities as the work

continues. This is your City and your input is important at every stage of the Comprehensive Plan process.

As we plan for the future, we must ensure that we maintain our current infrastructure. Our schools continue to provide excellent educational opportunities for Lynchburg's children. However, many of our schools are in need of renovation and repair. These renovations carry huge price tags---\$10 million dollars for Linkhorne Middle School, \$4 million for Sheffield Elementary, \$10 million for Dunbar Middle School and an estimated \$20-30 million for E.C. Glass High School. Some of these projects are complete, others are underway and others are still on the drawing board. City Council is committed to doing what it can to ensure that these projects stay on target. We ask the State to do the same.

A lady who has volunteered her time in our City schools is being recognized here tonight. Anne Wesley, a long-time resident of Lynchburg has committed countless hours to volunteering in our community. Serving for over 12 years on the Lynchburg Electoral Board, Anne has helped shaped our city's democracy. In addition to the Electoral Board, she has served on numerous others, including several in the field of fine arts and music. Anne is a woman who doesn't say no when asked to serve, but rather says yes enthusiastically and with the grace of a true leader. Ms. Wesley is with us tonight; please join me in thanking Anne for all she has done for Lynchburg and her community.

This past September marked the one-year anniversary of the sale of the City's fiber optic network to Ntelos. Fiber optics is now available at six industrial parks and high-speed Internet access has been provided to three after-school community centers. With the switch to Ntelos, the City has also realized cost savings on phone services of about \$110,000. In addition, the

City's network partnership earned an honorable mention from Public Technology Institute's National 2001 Technology Solutions Achievements Award program.

Technology allows us to be more efficient in our service delivery to citizens. We continue to expand web-based and electronic services. Citizens can now pay personal property and real estate taxes online, submit requests for City services online through our Citizens First program, receive emails about the information they need to know and access other information on the web. We will continue to explore other value-added opportunities to serve the public. We cannot afford to leave any segment of the population behind on the Information Super Highway. Thanks to a \$75,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and additional funding of \$14,000 from the Library of Virginia, the Lynchburg Public Library has been able to provide public Internet access and a computer training lab. Last year over 18,000 people used these computers and in March of this year, the Parks and Recreation Division will begin conducting free training classes for those wishing to gain computer skills.

Economic development is important to City Council and it is critical to the stability of this community. Someone once said, "You've got to be in a position for success to happen. Success doesn't go around looking for someone to stumble upon." Lynchburg has positioned itself for success. We have not suffered the level of economic setbacks that those in southwest Virginia have experienced due in no small part to the diversification of our industrial and business community. In October of last year we attended the groundbreaking for a new facility for M/A Com Wireless Systems. M/A Com's decision to expand in Lynchburg is a testament to their commitment to this area and our policy of being "open for business." It is vital that we

continue to search for ways to attract and retain businesses here in the city. It is so vital that a task force, led by our new director of Economic Development, Ed Miller, has been formed to focus on the business community. The message the task force will take with them is that we are a business friendly community. When our business community succeeds, we as a city succeed. Ed is with us tonight. Join me in welcoming him.

The last recipient I wish to recognize before turning the podium over to the Vice-Mayor cannot be with us tonight. Unfortunately he passed away last month at the age of 75. Rev. Bev Cosby played an instrumental role and was the driving force behind so many organizations including Lynchburg Christian Fellowship, Camp Kum-Bah-Yah, Lynchburg High Apartments, Interfaith Outreach and more. He was a man that upon seeing a need, would step up to find a way to have the need met. He will be greatly missed, but he has left a lasting legacy of service to this community. This evening we wish to recognize Rev. Cosby for his work. His brother, P. G. Cosby has graciously agreed to accept the Mayor's Award of Excellence in his brother's name. Please join me in honoring Rev. Bev. Cosby and in welcoming his brother P.G.

And now ladies and gentlemen, the Vice Mayor of the City of Lynchburg, Stewart Hobbs.

Thank you Mayor.

In 1988 a group of citizens concerned about substandard housing and the lack of affordable housing in Lynchburg got together to form the Lynchburg chapter of Habitat for Humanity. Since then, 310 adults and 445 children are in homes their families helped build and now own. You can not talk about Habitat for Humanity without talking about Mary Adams. She is a

member of the founding group of the Greater Lynchburg Habitat for Humanity and has served the chapter well as the volunteer coordinator, board president and executive director. She is a 2002 Mayor's Award of Excellence recipient. Welcome Mary.

Even with the extraordinary efforts of organizations like Habitat for Humanity, Lynchburg Neighborhood Development Foundation, the Lynchburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and others, safe, affordable housing still remains an issue. Through programs like Spot Blight and the Code Enforcement Task Force we have won some success in ensuring that neighborhoods remain intact. We want to send a clear message, especially to those who purchase property to use as rental homes that we will not tolerate neglect. Nothing brings down a neighborhood faster than a house that has been allowed to lapse into disrepair. Last year we told you that we would be searching for ways to proactively establish clear deeds for properties. I am happy to report that Lynchburg College and the Virginia Legal Aid Society have stepped into the void and are working with property owners to prepare wills. This will help establish ownership, and homes will not sit idle and vulnerable to decay. This is a good step in the right direction.

Carl said this city was strong because of its citizens and I have to agree with him. City councils may come and go. City administrators retire or move on but the one constant is the people who have a passion to serve others. Perhaps we are no different than other cities and if that is so, then all cities are blessed.

The Mayor's Award of Excellence recognizes those who have that passion to serve. It would take all night and quite possibly all of the next day to recognize those that are deserving of this recognition. As you can see by

the individuals already recognized tonight, each one has contributed greatly in one way or another to this community.

I am honored to be able to introduce and recognize the following individuals.

The Schewel name has been an integral part of Lynchburg's history ever since Elias Schewel started his business in 1897. Since coming to Lynchburg, each generation of Schewels has made their mark, not only in business but also in philanthropy. Tonight we honor a fourth generation Schewel. Marc Schewel is involved in numerous community service activities including serving as chair of the Lynchburg Jewish Council, the New Vistas School Board of Trustees, and the Churches of Urban Ministry Business Advisory board. He also serves on the board of directors of a number of other charitable and business organizations. And he's also known to give a pretty good speech. I am honored to recognize Marc Schewel tonight with a Mayor's Award of Excellence. Thank you Marc.

Look up the word tenacious and you'll find one name, Mrs. Mary Payne. A nurse by profession, Ms. Payne has volunteered with the American Red Cross for over ten years, been a community worker for the Lynchburg Public Library, and served on the boards of numerous organizations including the Greater Lynchburg Transit Company, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center, and the Lynchburg Community Action Group. However, although all this keeps her busy, Ms. Payne's true love is her neighborhood and she has worked diligently over the years to protect and preserve it. Mary is not a person that you can ignore when she wants something done---just ask some of the City administration and they will agree. We all wish there were many more citizens just like her. Ladies and gentlemen, Ms. Mary Payne.

Our last Mayor's Award of Excellence recipient is one whose face brings instant recognition. He currently serves as the Director of Public Relations and Web Services for WSET, but in his former life he was the news anchor for the same station. Jeff Taylor has worked in a number of capacities, in between the two, including program manager of Region 2000. Yet we honor him tonight for his extensive work as a volunteer. He serves as president of the Optimist Club, is on the Amazement Square board of directors and the Greater Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce Accreditation committee. He has also volunteered his time with Big Brothers and Sisters, the American Lung Association, Kaleidoscope, Regional Renaissance and the Partnership for the Prevention of Substance Abuse.

In addition, he often lends his talent as an emcee for numerous events. Jeff believes in giving back and his community is the better for it. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Mayor's Award of Excellence recipient, Jeff Taylor.

Tonight we have recognized eight individuals that have often set self aside for a greater purpose. They labor not for fortune and fame, but because inside each one burns the desire to help their fellow citizens. We honor only eight tonight, but there are many of you out there and that is why this City is strong.

In *The Path of Least Resistance*, Robert Fritz writes, "The historic period in which we live is a period of reawakening to a commitment to higher values, a reawakening of individual purpose, and a reawakening of the longing to fulfill that purpose in life."

Perhaps that is the change that Carl spoke of earlier and perhaps it is a lesson we should all learn.

We thank you for joining us tonight and we look forward to working with you in the months to come. God bless Lynchburg and God bless each of you. Good night.